

TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, December 2, 2014

9 – 11 a.m.

Room 319 City Hall

Meeting Notes

Committee members present: Kathleen Boe, Leonard Bonacci, Sean Broom, Hilary Dvorak, Tom Evers, Jessica Galatz, Michael Hagen, Jeff Johnson, Lance Knuckles, Chris Linde, Bob Loken, Jesse Osendorf, Heidi Ritchie, Patrick Sadler, Abdi Salah, Ben Shardlow, Sarah Stewart, Alene Tchourumoff [Please see [website](#) for Technical Advisory Committee Member affiliations]

Committee members excused: Doug Kress, Jeni Hager, Cyndi Harper, Dan Kenney, Cathy Polasky, Susan Segal, Rory Stierler, Melvin Tennant

Guests: Adam Arvidson, Steve Mahowald sitting in for Cyndi Harper, David Knoll sitting in for Melvin Tennant

Staff/consultants present: Lydia Major, Kjersti Monson, Erik Nilsson, Colleen O'Dell, Tyler Pederson, Jennifer Ringold, Brian Schaffer, Lacy Shelby, Marsha Wagner

1. Welcome

The meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) was called to order at 9:04 a.m. by Lacy Shelby, Principal Urban Designer, City of Minneapolis Community Planning & Economic Development (CPED). She invited her colleagues to introduce themselves: Jennifer Ringold, Director of Strategic Planning for the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB), and Kjersti Monson, Director, Long Range Planning, Minneapolis CPED.

To refresh those who attended the first meeting, and inform any first-time attendees, Ms. Monson said the project involves two separate but integrated plans. The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) is undertaking a Downtown Service Area Master Plan (DSAMP) which is a strategic planning and design document that will include plans for MPRB properties and spaces. The City is undertaking a policy document, looking at those elements of connectivity and integration in the City public realm. The goal will be to create two compatible and integrated plans that together will create an active, livable, programmed downtown and may set up future programming around wayfinding. The hope is that this work will result in three things: coordination among both public and private partners, integration of plans, and operations. Regarding operations, the City is not in a position to activate programming, but wants to provide base information for other entities to use in doing so.

2. Introductions

Ms. Ringold invited Technical Advisory Committee members, Park Board and City staff, and others in attendance to introduce themselves.

3. Data Practices

Erik Nilsson, Minneapolis City Attorney's office, gave a brief explanation of the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act, i.e., any communications—written, email, text—sent regarding this project would be considered government data and could be obtained by media or the public should they ask pursuant to a formal data practices request. He quoted Minn. Stat. § 13.02, subd. 7 in defining government data: “all data collected, created, received, maintained, or disseminated by any

government entity regardless of its physical form, storage media or conditions of use.” Mr. Nilsson cautioned committee members not to mix personal communications in with project-based communications, and to not say anything in another format that they wouldn’t feel comfortable saying in a meeting or in person.

4. Reflect on Discussion at First TAC Meeting

Ms. Ringold said that throughout this process the Project Team would be giving feedback to the Committee on how they are using the data collected at the meetings to move forward. Minutes from each meeting will also be distributed to Committee members.

Information was gathered on wishes, challenges, opportunities and resources, and on other stakeholders to be included in the discussion. That information was grouped into the following key categories:

- Design influence, guidance and standards
- Collaboration/timing with other projects/opportunities – making sure we didn’t miss any opportunities anticipated over the next two to three years
- Funding – everything from operations and maintenance to capital ideas
- Specific programs/services/infrastructure – urban gardens and agriculture, wayfinding
- Implementation steps
- Community engagement
- Measures (data) and Metrics in Decision Making

Several action items have been identified as a result of extensive discussion on collaboration with other projects:

- Map overlapping planning processes to determine opportunities for collaboration and critical influence
- Develop categories for design influence, such as wayfinding
- Capture data for funding, implementation and measures for policy development
- Use Community Engagement insights in refinement of community engagement plans—expanding on ways to gather input from unique audiences; people living, working, or visiting Downtown

At the first meeting, the Committee members recommended a number of specific groups or individuals to be included in this discussion who were not present. In the public safety realm, the Park Police are included in the MPRB’s internal project team, and the Minneapolis Police Department has been invited to TAC. The School Board and Minneapolis Downtown Council have representation on the Steering Committee; the Downtown Greening Conservancy will have a representative once the Executive Director is in place. The Minneapolis Downtown Council also has a representative on the TAC. David Frank, the only individual mentioned as a recommended stakeholder, has been invited to TAC meetings; the North Loop Neighborhood Association has a representative on the Steering Committee.

5. Transportation Layering

Ms. Shelby led the group through several slides showing the results of analysis and data collection that has taken place since early summer [[PPT Pages 9-15](#)]. The first was a snapshot of key areas in Downtown that this group will be focusing on, particularly how they link to transportation. A transportation inventory has been executed, showing key access points for people coming into and leaving Downtown. Overlays were created showing LRT and rail, bus, taxi stands, bicycle, and

skyway connections, with the final slide showing all of the above. The next step will be to identify “hot zones,” where multiple transportation modes intersect and connect. Ms. Shelby presented preliminary focus corridors that have been identified where there is a maximum amount of vehicular and pedestrian traffic [[PPT Page 16](#)].

Ms. Monson emphasized that identification of the preliminary focus corridors is a first draft, and feedback will be sought from the TAC and Steering Committee on whether and why these streets should be considered a priority.

Ms. Shelby clarified that in assigning priority using existing policy frameworks, these streets have the most amount of activity that connect to the outer ring, i.e. North, East, Southwest, Uptown. In subsequent discussion about what would be done on the streets identified as preliminary focus corridors, Ms. Shelby said roadway geometric changes would not be made, but that these enhancements would be on top of what has been identified in Access Minneapolis, the ten-year transportation plan. It will include livability improvements.

Ms. Monson added that there is an opportunity to provide an identity for some of the corridors, the most obvious being the LRT alignment, which is the City’s event connection corridor although that is not apparent to visitors. These corridors could be branded by signage, and enhancements like benches and trees. The City cannot add amenities to all of these areas, but can coordinate efforts and explore new tools in partnering with the private sector to accomplish this.

Ms. Shelby added that identification of preliminary focus corridors does not reflect investment currently in progress on Nicollet Mall, Hennepin Avenue and many other streets.

Concern was expressed that there is no connection to the Mississippi River evident, and it was urged that attention be paid in moving people from Downtown to the River. Ms. Shelby said that area plans and policy documents already in place have identified some connections to the River, but it will certainly be considered in this project. It was also suggested that connections across the River to Northeast and Southeast should be considered, and the Stone Arch Bridge will be added to the map and labeled as a feature.

When asked if these corridors are identified in Access Minneapolis, Ms. Shelby said that this project feeds into what Access Minneapolis prescribed in 2008, adding amenities at a different level and looking at destinations.

There was a suggestion that there be more east-west connections, specifically along Seventh Street as a primary focus and possibly Eleventh Street, to connect the development that is taking place in East Downtown and the stadium area. Ms. Shelby said that while the map doesn’t currently indicate this, that a hierarchy of priority could be explored in communicating connectivity and investment.

6. Programmable Space

Ms. Shelby said that CPED has hired a consultant, Perkins & Will, who is executing an analysis of programmable space, in Downtown, as indicated on a map [[PPT page 17](#)]. They have identified and collected information on more than 80 potentially programmable spaces, ranging from large plazas to small vegetated areas with seating. Programming could be done by various entities who wish to hold an event or activity in the City and are looking for suitable venues. Note that MPRB spaces also have a separate event permitting process. In order to provide a resource to these groups, the City wants to be able to catalog and provide information such as capacity, amenities, features (i.e. ephemeral,

winter vs. summer use), and flexibility of the spaces, including open spaces. Peavey Plaza was given as an example [[PPT pages 18-21](#)] to show the kinds of things included in the analysis. Referring again to the programmable space map, Ms. Shelby described it as a constellation of spaces that can be linked together to meet a specific need, offering these spaces rather than closing down streets for events.

Ms. Monson added that private property owners would have to opt-in to be included in the catalog. She said that the City will create this inventory as a resource, similar in scope to the [Bryant Park Event Planning Guide](#) which includes specific information about access to facilities, proximity to parking, whether or not there is lighting, nearby transit stops, dimension of space, and contact information to access and book spaces. Ms. Monson reiterated that programming would be done by other entities.

In answer to questions about the timeline and financing for the programmable space inventory, Ms. Shelby said that it will be concluded by December 2015. The result will be a document that can inform public, investor and other entities of the scope of available spaces for programming.

Ms. Monson added CPED is looking at other financing tools that might be available, citing as an example the Los Angeles Permitting Program wherein a corridor is identified with certain amenities to be added; business owners along that corridor who want to participate can pull a permit and install that amenity. Neighborhood or business associations could seek grant money for enhancements, maintenance and operations. They will be looking at peer cities to understand more about those options. Programming could also be a potential revenue source.

7. Physical Framework Analysis

During the summer and fall Ms. Shelby worked with interns who walked around with iPhones and iPads to take specific data points on features that already exist in the Downtown Public Realm other than MPRB parks, collecting specific GPS points. The process was to take a photograph of the element or feature and identify features such as:

- Street furniture—if seating, what type, and with or without backs; this will help determine if the seating should be more distributed, and if it is appropriate for its location
- Art—not representative of the Minneapolis public art inventory; it includes all art in the public right-of-way
- Bike racks—aneccdotally mentioned that data was collected during business hours Monday-Friday and almost all bike racks were full
- Vegetation—includes elective vegetation put in by property owners or other entities, like raised planters, window-well planters, and data was collected on whether or not the vegetation was maintained; it does not reflect street trees as those are reflected on a separate data layer. It also does not include vegetation within parks.
- Wayfinding—devices that help people understand where to go and how to get to specific places, including how they intersect with each other

These features are mapped separately [[PPT pages 23-27](#)]. More than 2800 data points have been collected. Each data point has a photograph and a time stamp associated with it. The intent is to make all of this data publicly available to partners.

8. Community Engagement Strategies

Ms. Ringold commended the City on establishing a good baseline of information that is already collected and exists. She suggested that if TAC members know of other data that exists, they should inform Ms. Shelby and Ms. Monson.

Ms. Ringold continued with the discussion about community engagement strategies and resources and posed the following questions to the TAC.

Who are the individuals or organized groups (including potential critics) who you know expect to be consulted on a project like this, and who could become major critics or supporters?

- Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA); Kevin Lewis, Executive Director
- Hennepin Theatre Trust
- University of Minnesota – resources, design competition for Downtown concepts last winter, architecture students; Mick Johnson, Metropolitan Design Center, Tom Fisher
- University of St. Thomas
- Hennepin Technical College
- Condominium and apartment management

Ms. Ringold asked if there were any specific individuals or groups that could potentially need more engagement.

- Neighborhood organizations (all are included on the Steering Committee)
- Loring Park Association; Friends of Loring Park
- Warehouse District

Potential Advocates:

- Minneapolis Downtown Council
- Minneapolis Bicycle Coalition
- Neighborhood organizations

Ms. Monson brought up the challenge of funding improvements in the public realm, which is a consistent issue for cities who find that there are not a lot of funds available for enhancement and livability initiatives, and wondered if there would be room for this on the legislative agenda. Regarding livability, it was mentioned by one TAC member that the business community would love to support enhancements in Downtown but livability issues, i.e. panhandling and aggressive solicitation, need to be addressed. Currently people “do not feel comfortable” being Downtown, because of some of the issues addressed previously. Another member expressed the hope that City Council members be informed on what is going on, specifically in their Wards.

Which networks, blogs, or major social media users (including professional societies) are you aware of that would be interested in downtown spaces and places, and who could help spread the word?

- Streets.mn
- UrbanMSP
- Urban Land Institute (ULI)
- Southwest Journal, Longfellow Review—neighborhood newspapers that are not Downtown
- Broader media statewide, voices from the city communicating with outstate Minnesota to influence perception/reality

[Ms. Monson said this resonates with a recent City decision to start measuring livability. There are different indexes that measure things like skills/workforce, what makes a city globally competitive, and livability, which considers things like crime, public safety, and affordability.]

- Meet Minneapolis has branded City by Nature to market the City. During the Vikings game broadcast on November 30, the announcers made numerous mention of how cold it was. How we talk about Minneapolis to the suburbs and the rest of the world is important.
- The major cultural venues have email distribution lists of people who come Downtown occasionally for major events.
- MSFA / LRT

Ms. Ringold announced that a new blog is being created specifically for this project that will be coming online in January 2015.

Do you have contacts with any providers of social services downtown or downtown faith-based communities?

- Westminster Church – working with neighbors to change outdoor spaces
- Minneapolis Downtown Council’s 2025 Plan, Ending Street Homelessness – committee on homelessness comprised of social service providers including Heading Home Hennepin, St. Stephen’s, Salvation Army
- Downtown Congregations to End Homelessness

Are there any existing visitor surveys or research (e.g., economic impact study, convention sales) efforts underway or planned?

- Convention Center – economic impact study in 2015
- Minneapolis Riverfront Partnership
- Bob Strachota, Nicollet Mall funding research
- All-Star game survey relating to economic impact on the City
- Downtown Council/DID Perception Survey
- City’s annual resident survey, tied to specific neighborhoods

9. Small Group Exercise

Ms. Shelby led the small group exercise by asking TAC members to form three small groups. She distributed to each group a stack of printed photographs showing different places and people involved in various activities. TAC members were asked to select a couple of photographs that demonstrate what their ideal downtown looks like, writing a short description of what it means to them, to livability downtown, what people like about downtown, its identity. At the conclusion of the exercise, each group selected a representative to report back to the others.

Group One:

- Activities for all ages
- Events
- Year-round uses
- Kids playing around a fountain
- People occupying the sidewalk and taking ownership of it with Farmers Markets, fruit stands, outdoor seating
- Cohesive urban fabric with buildings that push out to the street
- Active nightlife, an icon that attracts attention and create excitement
- Variety of seating, informal

Group Two:

- Winter scenes—trying to embrace and cultivate a better image of winter, “own winter,” better ways to brand winter, using spaces all year not just around the holidays
- Activities for children
- Continuing to cultivate the green spaces
- A lot of street activity: street theater; spontaneous, organized or individualized events
- Spaces and activities for all ages, 8 to 80
- Urban garden, urban agriculture
- Biking community—will continue to grow so need more bike racks, more amenities, more ways to embrace and cultivate that culture; reclaim ranking as #1 bike city in the country

Group Three:

- Creating and engaging visible storefronts
- Activation of sidewalk areas in front of properties
- Public gathering spaces
- Active spaces for play
- Street art
- Parks and play areas, children and adults
- Include options for adults, nightlife, things that don't shut down at night
- Impromptu gathering spaces

Ms. Shelby said that it is interesting and important to learn what is being done in other places in the world, and use that information to determine how we can create spaces that can allow for more of these types of activities. When she asked if there was any theme missing in the photographs, one TAC member said that rivers and natural water features were noticeably absent. Ms. Shelby explained that the river is not being specifically avoided in this project, but the MPRB has done its Central Mississippi Riverfront Plan, and the City and DNR are working on Critical Area Rules to address it. However, with that said, Shelby said connections to the river will be specifically addressed. Another TAC member said she did not see in the photographs elements of public safety, and thinks it is important for people to see positive interactions with police officers, particularly on bike, foot, or mounted patrol.

Ms. Shelby then asked if the top priorities of represented entities or agencies were reflected in the photographs. Someone replied that there were not many bicycle images; he saw one where the person was riding in the open street, not a protected bikeway. Public Works is about to release a protected bikeway plan, which is a key piece and will overlay against a lot of the features. Another feature identified as missing in the photographs was a mature tree canopy.

To conclude this exercise, Ms. Shelby said that one thing that stood out as a core focus area is Minneapolis as a winter city. We need to explore ways to enhance that experience and change the branding, especially as we lead up to the Super Bowl, by showing positive images of people enjoying the winter. Skyways will be extremely busy during that time.

Lydia Major, Landscape Architect with LHB Inc. and a consultant on this project, announced the upcoming meeting schedules for TAC (January 6, February 3, March 3, April 7, May 5) and the Steering Committee (January 15, March 19, May 21, July 16). She then introduced the take-home exercise, asking TAC members to complete the following and send their responses to Marsha Wagner [marsha@castlevisions.com]:

- What is the urban space or program (in Minneapolis or elsewhere) that you love and think would be a great addition to our City's downtown? Submit a picture, or even better, snap a picture.
- Tell us why it is right for Minneapolis in 140 characters or less.
- Tell us in one sentence if you think anything would need to change to make it happen.

10. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 10:36 a.m.